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ABSTRACT

Measures of the perception of occupational prestige and vocational maturity of 313 high school students representing grades 9 through 12 were investigated together with variables: father's occupation, occupational choice, grade level, age, intelligence, verbal and non-verbal abilities, and reading and math achievements. Significant correlates of the perception of occupational prestige, showing no sex differences were vocational maturity (p .001), educational level associated with father's occupation (p .001), IQ (p .001), verbal ability (p .001), non-verbal (p .001), reading achievement (p .001) and math achievement (p .001). There was no correlation, however, between the perception of occupational prestige hierarchy must have been established much earlier in childhood, at least by grade 9 or 13 years of age. Data on vocational maturity as measured by the Crites Vocational Development Inventory Attitude Scale are also presented and discussed. References and tables are included. (Author)

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CORRELATES OF THE PERCEPTION OF OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE*

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Abstract

Measures of the perception of occupational prestige and vocational maturity of 313 high school students representing grades 9 through 12 were investigated together with variables: father's occupation, occupational choice, grade level, age, intelligence, verbal and non-verbal abilities, and reading and math achievements. Significant correlates of the perception of occupational prestige, showing no sex differences were vocational maturity ($p<.001$), educational level associated with father's occupation ($p<.01$), educational level required for the occupation chosen by the student ($p<.001$), IQ ($p<.001$), verbal ability ($p<.001$), non-verbal ability ($p<.001$), reading and math achievement ($p<.001$) achievement ($p<.001$). There was no correlation, however, between the perception of occupational prestige and grade level or age indicating that the perception of occupational prestige hierarchy must have been established much earlier in childhood, at least by grade 9 or 13 years of age. Data on vocational maturity as measured by the Crites Vocational Development Inventory Attitude Scale are also presented and discussed.

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The individual's perception of occupational prestige hierarchy may be viewed as the strength of affective responses, positive or negative, he attaches to occupations. The perception of occupational prestige hierarchy as a variable (measured in terms of accuracy or lack of it using as the criterion a national norm established by the National Opinion Research Center in 1947) has been found to be significantly associated with counseling seeking behavior (Tseng and Thompson, 1968), motivational factors including the motive to approach success and the motive to avoid failure (Tseng and Carter, 1970), socio-economic status (Tseng, 1971), and persistence in school (Tseng, 1972).

Vocational maturity is a complex multi-dimensional construct. Super and Overstreet (1960) reported six indicies of vocational maturity which seemed to have construct validity. The indicies were concerned with choice, acceptance of responsibility specificity of information, specificity of planning, extent of planning, and use of resources. According to Gribbons and Lohnes (1964) eight variables contributed to readiness for vocational planning. They were factors in curriculum choice, factors in occupational choice, verbalized strengths and weaknesses, accuracy of self-appraisal evidence of self-ratings, interests, values and independence of choice. Crites (1969) advanced a model of vocational maturity with four dimensions - consistency of vocational choice, wisdom of vocational choice, vocational choice competencies, and vocational choice attitudes - which subsume eighteen variables.

In validating a scale for the measurement of the maturity of vocational attitudes (vocational choice attitudes) in adolescence, Crites found that verbally expressed vocational behaviors matured with increasing age during adolescence (Crites, 1965).

Within the framework of viewing vocational choice as a process of longitudinal vocational decision-making that takes place throughout the period of adolescence, the

purpose of this study was to determine developmental communality between the perception of occupational prestige and vocational maturity as well as their intercorrelations with grade level, age, intelligence, verbal ability, non-verbal ability, reading achievement, mathmatics achievement, educational level associated with father's occupation, and educational level required of the occupation chosen by the adolescent.

METHODS

Subjects

A sample of 313 high school students representing grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 was involved in the study. Of these subjects, there were 149 males and 164 females with their ages ranging from 13 years 1 month to 18 years 9 months and IQs ranging from 70 to 140.

Instruments

The instruments administered to the subjects were a short-form of North-Hatt Occupational Prestige Scale and the Crites Vocational Development Inventory Attitude Scale Form IV.

The short-form occupational prestige scale consists of 20 occupations which were selected from the 90 in the North-Hatt Scale (National Opinion Research Center, 1947). The 20 occupations were selected by drawing 2 representative occupations from each of the 10 prestige levels consisting of 9 occupations each on the original North-Hatt Scale.

The occupations are, in alphabetical order with the prestige rankings (derived from the NORC's national norm) enclosed in parentheses: accountant (7), architect (4), auto mechanic (15), bookkeeper (12), clerk in a store (14), coal miner (17), county agricultural agent (9), county judge (3), electrician (10), filling station attendant (18), insurance agent (11), janitor (19), lawyer (5), mining engineer (6), physician(1)

policeman (13), public school teacher (8), scientist (2), shoe shiner (20), and truck driver (16). These 20 occupations were presented to the subject in pairs (there were 190 pairs in all) and he was required to examine each pair and select the occupation which, in his opinion, had higher prestige level than the other one in the pair. The scoring was then done by assigning for each pair a zero to the selection of the keyed occupation (the one having higher prestige according to the national norm) or a negative score representing the rank discrepancy to the selection of the other occupation (the one with lower prestige in accordance with the national norm). Summing across the 190 responses yielded the occupational prestige score which represented the accuracy of the perception of occupational prestige hierarchy.

The Vocational Development Inventory Attitude Scale Form IV was used by this study to yield the measure of vocational maturity. The 50-item Attitude Scale was developed by the rational-empirical approach to measure the attitudinal or dispositional response-tendencies in vocational maturity which are nonintellective but which mediate both choice behaviors and choice aptitudes (Crites, 1965).

Additional data were collected from the students' permanent record cards including scores yielded by the Educational Development Series (Scholastic Testing Service, 1970) on IQ, verbal and non-verbal abilities, and reading and mathematics achievement. Also, the students were asked to make occupational choice and list their father's occupation.

RESULTS

Means and standard deviations of the eleven variables examined in the study are summarized in Table 1.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

It should be noted that the perception of occupational prestige measure assumed a negative quantity indicating the degree of deviation from zero which represented

the perfect accuracy, using the NORC's national norm as the criterion.

The general educational level required for a given occupation, be it the student's occupational choice or his father's occupation, was determined by the following scheme (Holland, 1971): occupations requiring no training, educational level 1; occupations requiring only elementary school training, educational level 2; occupations requiring high school education, educational level 3: occupations some additional training (college, technical, business) beyond high school, educational level 4; occupations requiring four years of college, educational level 5; and occupations requiring graduate work, educational level 6. An upward inter-generation occupational mobility was reflected in the mean educational level of 4.4 for the occupations chosen by the students and the mean educational level of 3.5 for their father's occupations. The upward occupational mobility was shown by both the male and female students.

Correlates of the Perception of Occupational Prestige

Correlational analyses were conducted for the purpose of determining the relationship between the perception of occupational prestige and vocational maturity and their intercorrelations with the other nine variables. Table 2 shows the results.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Vocational maturity was found to be a significant correlate of the student's perception of occupational prestige. The product-moment correlation co-efficients for the male, female, and total groups were .24 ($N=149$, $p<.01$), .24 ($N=164$, $p<.01$), and .26 ($N=313$, $p<.001$), respectively, indicating that regardless of sex, the accuracy of perception of occupational prestige hierarchy was positively associated with vocational maturity.

Seven other significant correlates of the perception of occupational prestige that too showed no sex differences were educational level associated with father's occupation ($r=.19$, $N=217$, $p<.01$), educational level required of the occupation chosen by the student ($r=.33$, $N=302$, $p<.001$), IQ ($r=.43$, $N=309$, $p<.001$), verbal ability

(r=.42, N=309, p<.001), non-verbal ability (r=.27, N=309, p<.001), reading achievement (r=.44, N=309, p<.001), and mathematics achievement (r=.30, N-307, p<.001). These findings indicate that the higher the general educational level associated with father's occupation and with the occupation chosen by the student and the higher the intelligence, verbal and non-verbal abilities, and reading and math achievements the more accurate would be the student's perception of the occupational prestige hierarchy.

There was no significant correlation, however, between the perception of occupational prestige and grade level or age for this sample of 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders.

Correlates of Vocational Maturity

As shown in Table 2, vocational maturity, as measured by the Crites Vocational Development Inventory Attitude Scale Form IV, was significantly correlated, without sex differences, with the perception of occupational prestige (r=.26, N=313, p<.001), educational level associated with father's occupation (r=.21, N=217, p<.01), grade level (r=.22, N=313, p<.01), ~~grade level (r=.22, N=313, p<.001),~~ IQ (r=.33, N=309, p<.001), verbal ability (r=.28, N=309, p<.001), reading achievement (r=.37, N=309, p<.001), and mathematics achievement (r=.19, N=307, p<.01). In other words, higher vocational maturity was associated with more accurate perception of occupational prestige hierarchy, higher general educational level required for father's occupation, higher grade level, higher intelligence, higher verbal ability, and higher reading and math achievement for both the male and female students.

It must be noted, however, that vocational maturity was found to correlate significantly with educational level required for the occupation chosen by the student (r=.21, N=157, p<.01) for the female group and that non-verbal ability was significantly associated with vocational maturity within the male group only (r=.18, N=147, p<.05).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal considerable communality between the perception of occupational prestige hierarchy and vocational maturity not only in terms of their significant intercorrelation but also in terms of the significant common correlates they shared in the educational level associated with father's occupation, intelligence, verbal ability, reading achievement, and mathematics achievement.

From human developmental viewpoint one aspect of these empirical findings stands out rather conspicuously. That is that while the time factor, represented in the study by grade level and age, showed no correlations at all with the accuracy of the perception of occupational hierarchy, it (especially with respect to grade level) correlated significantly with vocational maturity as far as the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders were concerned. This distinctive difference indicates that the perception of occupational prestige hierarchy must have been established much earlier in one's life, at least by grade 9 or 13 years of age, and that the student's vocational behaviors continue to mature throughout the period grades 9 to 12.

According to Crites (1965) vocational maturity consists of four factors: consistency of vocational choice, wisdom of vocational choice, vocational choice competencies, and vocational choice attitudes. Although the Vocational Development Inventory Attitude Scale purports to measure only the vocational choice attitudes dimention, this instrument was used in the current study to yield a vocational maturity measure. The findings seem to confirm the construct validity to a certain degree, as far as using it to quantify the construct vocational maturity is concerned, in that one would expect a vocationally mature individual to have more accurate perception of occupational prestige hierarchy, more achievement and planning oriented socioeconomic background, higher grade level, higher intelligence and scholastic

aptitudes, and higher academic achievements in reading and mathematics and that all these relationships have been found to be true statistically for both the male and female students.

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FOOTNOTE

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Table 1

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE ELEVEN VARIABLES BY SEX

Variables	Male			Female			Total		
	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N
Perception of occ. prestige	-320.6	157.0	149	-266.7	89.4	164	-292.3	128.9	313
Voc. maturity (attitude)	33.5	5.7	149	35.7	5.5	164	34.7	5.7	313
Educ. level of father's occ.	3.5	0.8	105	3.5	0.9	112	3.5	0.9	217
Educ. level of S's occ. choice	4.5	1.1	145	4.4	0.7	157	4.4	0.9	302
Grade Level	10.4	1.2	149	10.4	1.2	164	10.4	1.2	313
Age	15.7	1.2	147	15.5	1.3	163	15.6	1.2	310
IQ	100.3	15.2	147	101.9	14.5	162	101.1	14.8	309
Verbal ability	31.7	9.4	147	32.8	9.3	162	32.3	9.4	309
Non-verbal ability	37.0	8.7	147	36.3	7.7	162	36.6	8.2	309
Reading achievement	36.3	12.9	147	40.6	12.0	162	38.6	12.6	309
Math achievement	27.7	9.1	145	27.2	8.0	162	27.5	8.5	307

TABLE 2

CORRELATES OF PERCEPTION OF OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE
AND VOCATIONAL MATURITY (ATTITUDE)

Variables	Perception of occ. Prestige			Voc. maturity (Attitude)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Perception of occ. prestige	1.00 (149)	1.00 (164)	1.00 (313)	.24** (149)	.24** (164)	.26*** (313)
Voc. maturity (attitude)	.24** (149)	.24** (164)	.26** (313)	1.00 (149)	1.00 (164)	1.00 (313)
Educ. level of father's occ.	.21* (105)	.19* (112)	.19** (217)	.19* (105)	.23* (112)	.21* (217)
Educ. level of S's occ. choice	.42*** (145)	.21** (157)	.33*** (302)	.12 (145)	.21** (157)	.14* (302)
Grade level	-106 (149)	.09 (164)	-.01 (313)	.24** (149)	.22** (164)	.22*** (313)
Age	-.14 (147)	.08 (163)	-.07 (310)	.04 (147)	.26** (163)	.13* (310)
IQ	.49*** (147)	.35*** (162)	.43*** (309)	.39*** (147)	.27*** (162)	.33*** (309)
Verbal ability	.51*** (147)	.32*** (162)	.42*** (309)	.30*** (147)	.24** (162)	.28*** (309)
Non-verbal ability	.33*** (147)	.23** (162)	.27*** (309)	.18* (147)	.13 (162)	.14* (309)
Reading achievement	.46*** (147)	.37*** (162)	.44*** (309)	.32*** (147)	.37*** (162)	.37*** (309)
Math achievement	.38*** (145)	.22** (162)	.30*** (307)	.24** (145)	.15* (162)	.19** (307)

* P< .05
** < .01
*** < .001

The numbers in parentheses indicates the number of cases.